

Transylvania County Natural Area Inventory

REASONOVER CREEK COVE Significant Natural Heritage Area

Site Significance: Regional

Quadrangle: Standingstone Mountain

Size: 308 acres

Ownership: N.C. Division of Forest
Resources (DuPont State Forest) and private

SIGNIFICANT FEATURES: Reasonover Creek Cove contains one of the best known populations of Seneca snakeroot (*Polygala senega*) in the state. The presence of other rare plant species including pretty sedge (*Carex woodii*), purple fringeless orchid (*Platanthera peramoena*), French Broad heartleaf (*Hexastylis rhombiformis*), and a population of green salamanders (*Aneides aeneus*) further support the significance of the site. In addition to these features, the occurrence of Rich Cove Forest and Montane Oak-Hickory Forest with a rich herb layer in an area dominated by acidic soils is noteworthy. These communities contain a number Watch List plants as well as other species that are uncommon in the local area. Reasonover Creek also contributes to a significant wildlife corridor that extends from the protected lands along the Blue Ridge Escarpment in South Carolina north to DuPont State Forest.

LANDSCAPE RELATIONSHIPS: Reasonover Creek Cove is located within the Buck Forest Macrosite, just north of Reasonover Creek Headwaters and the Blue Ridge Escarpment. The site begins downstream of Reasonover Lake, extends to Lake Julia in DuPont State Forest, and encompasses the valley slopes on both sides of the creek. Joanna Mountain is approximately 0.5 miles to the north, across Lake Julia. Little River/Cedar Mountain Natural Area is approximately 0.5 miles west. Duncan Mountain and Green River Headwaters lie east and west of Reasonover Creek, respectively.

SITE DESCRIPTION: Reasonover Creek descends from the Blue Ridge Escarpment through a moderately steep valley on its way north into DuPont Forest. The stream valley and its tributaries all contain examples of cove forest, including locally uncommon Rich Cove Forest, Acidic Cove Forest, and Canada Hemlock Forest. The slopes and ridges are dominated by moderately mature oak forest, which co-occurs and overlaps with Rich Cove Forest. A Piedmont/Mountain Semipermanent Impoundment with several rare plants occupies the edge of Lake Julia near its confluence with Reasonover Creek.

Rich Cove Forest occurs on several east-facing slopes above Reasonover Creek. This forest is quite lush with well-developed canopy and herb layers. Dominant canopy species include bitternut hickory (*Carya cordiformis*), pignut hickory (*C. glabra*), tulip poplar (*Liriodendron tulipifera*), red oak (*Quercus rubra*), and white oak (*Q. alba*) along with other mesic hardwoods. Fraser's magnolia (*Magnolia fraseri*), Carolina silverbell (*Halesia tetraptera*), and yellow buckeye (*Aesculus flava*) are occasional understory trees. Shrubs are present in moderate density and include spicebush (*Lindera benzoin*), wild hydrangea (*Hydrangea radiata*), and mountain sweet pepper-bush (*Clethra acuminata*). Mock-orange (*Philadelphus inodorus*), which is quite rare in Transylvania County, is also reported to occur in this community. The herb layer is extremely diverse and contains some